

*School Enrollment Task Force Meeting  
Town Hall  
730 Massachusetts Avenue  
Arlington, MA  
Wednesday, December 9, 2015  
7:00 p.m.*

**Minutes**

**Present:** Kathleen Bodie, Superintendent of Schools  
Adam Chapdelaine, Town Manager  
John Cole, Permanent Town Building Committee  
Joseph Curro, Board of Selectmen  
Diane Mahon, Board of Selectmen  
Charles Foskett, Finance Committee  
Alan Tosti, Finance Committee  
William Hayner, School Committee  
Cindy Starks, School Committee  
Jeff Thielman, School Committee

**Call to Order:** 7:07 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Chapdelaine indicated that the November 30, 2015 meeting minutes had not been reviewed as yet and will be on the next meeting's agenda for approval.

**Discussion: January Visioning Session**

According to Ms. Starks, the School Committee Community Relations Subcommittee has been assigned the task of establishing a parent/voter forum on visioning for the schools. This meeting is scheduled for January 7, 2016 at Town Hall. The Subcommittee will seek public input to address issues including district consolidation, the size of the middle school, class size and teacher load, and the cost impact to the town.

On a **motion** made by Mr. Curro and seconded, it was voted that the School Enrollment Task Force (SETF) would co-sponsor the forum on vision for the schools. Vote: Unanimous

**Information Report**

As requested by the SETF at its previous meeting, Ms. Bodie submitted and reviewed for the committee's consideration and discussion key elements of the information memo prepared by her with assistance from CFO Diane Johnson. In addition to the information report, a map provided by the Town Manager with a list of town property locations was distributed.

The 5-page report suggests a number of planning challenges with regard to the process of addressing the elementary school enrollment dilemma, including cost of additional space, time needed to provide building and installation, land space issues, and disruption of the schools and community. It was also noted that the Facilities Subcommittee met this week to identify certain goals, one of which was a commitment to neighborhood schools.

Other highlights of the report addressed the potential timeline for specific space recommendations, modular classrooms for Thompson for September 2016, the Gibbs renovation, number of classrooms required, and core spaces. While costs for providing additional classroom space, renovations, etc. were

contained in the report, Ms. Bodie stated that these numbers were not absolute and would require further analysis to tighten cost estimates. For example, it would be difficult to get accurate numbers on the Gibbs renovation because those numbers .. it would depend on the scope of the renovation. Noted also, modular classrooms that might be proposed at the Ottoson would be problematic given the footprint of the property.

*Points of discussion, concerns, and suggestions included:*

- *Timelines for submitting articles for the January Special Town Meeting.*
- *Possible extension of the Thompson School project to build an addition using the same architect, design and material.*
- *Possible expansion of the Peirce, Stratton, and Bishop districts to alleviate numbers at Thompson and Hardy.*
- *Combining the Thompson and Hardy districts.*
- *Modular classroom (possible \$5,000/month) additional costs for furniture, technology, and anything that does not have anything to do with construction.*
- *The need to address funding issues and their impact on the taxpayer as related to the Stratton renovation and the high school rebuild, as well as the possibility of the Minuteman obligation.*
- *Exploration of a grade 5-6 and 7-8 school model, partial Gibbs renovation for a satellite campus, shifting district lines, financial implications of the neighborhood school model.*
- *Concern about the reliability of projected student enrollment numbers as forecast on the McKibben report and the need for an update on those projections as well as the fact that a decision by the MSBA would impact greatly the longer-range thinking on this issue.*
- *Need to think in terms of scope and cost before asking voters for funding.*
- *Focus must be on the Thompson decision in preparation of the January meeting.*
- *Middle School issues.*
- *Temporary space for administration and consideration of using other facilities in bordering communities and other locations.*
- *Details of the Parmenter School and square footage.*

### **Audience Participation**

*Questions and comments received from those community members in attendance included:*

- *Possibility of reconfiguring school gyms to accommodate more space.*
- *Questions about the annual Town Meeting with regard to High School project. Ms. Bodie indicated that the urgency of the Ottoson for 2017 will be part of that decision.*
- *Ms. Bodie spoke about trends in response to a question regarding the overcrowding at the new Thompson.*
- *There was criticism about the process from one participant who could not understand how the committee could be so far off with regard to enrollment projections.*
- *Concern about town growth and project numbers and more long-term solutions.*
- *Exploration of private funding.*
- *Thompson Principal Donato spoke about the value and importance of the grade K-5 experience and the specific and immediate needs of the Thompson population as opposed to other schools.*

### **Adjournment**

*On a Motion made and seconded, it was voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 p.m.*

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Marie Carroll*